

To: Hull, George[Hull.George@epa.gov]
Cc: Lemon, Mollie[Lemon.Mollie@epa.gov]
From: Ethan Barton
Sent: Thur 4/14/2016 10:58:58 PM
Subject: Re: Bonita Peak Mining District HRS

Got it, thank you. I'll pass these along to my editor.

On Thursday, April 14, 2016, Hull, George <Hull.George@epa.gov> wrote:

Mr. Barton,

I'm sending you our answers to the three questions you sent us earlier today. We continue to work on the additional question you sent us an a later e-mail. If you need to attribute this response, please attribute to an "EPA Spokesperson." Thanks,

George Hull

Office of Media Relations

U.S. EPA

Tel. 202-564-0790

1. Why was drinking water not assessed in the HRS, given the details provided?

The Hazard Ranking System is not a risk assessment. It is a numerical screening model, prescribed by regulation, used to determine eligibility for the NPL. Using the HRS, EPA assigns certain points for various types of receptors actually or potentially impacted by hazardous substances for each evaluated pathway. For the Bonita Peak site, EPA evaluated the surface water pathway and, using the HRS, documented that the site was eligible to be included on the NPL based on the presence of fisheries and a threatened species relative to the observed releases of hazardous substances at the site. A drinking water assessment was not necessary to document that the site was eligible for the NPL. Addition to the NPL will lead to a detailed assessment of risks from all pathways through the remedial investigation.

2. How can the human food chain be so heavily threatened, but the drinking water, as well as the Animas River, is safe for humans?

EPA is aware that hazardous constituents have been and continue to release to fisheries within the watershed, but it is unknown at this point the risks to the human food chain. Additional data collection is required before risks to the human food chain are understood.

3. Has the EPA warned local residents and provided guidance on the threat to the human food chain?

Fishing advisories are the province of the state.

On September 1, 2015 CDPHE issued a fact sheet with the following statement: “ The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recommends that eating trout from the Animas River at this time is considered safe. CDPHE analyzed fish tissue from rainbow and brown trout from the Animas River. Based on the limited samples available, most of the post (Gold King) event fish tissue analyzed showed metals below detectable levels and all results fall below risk screening levels. Because there is a potential for the fish to concentrate metals in their tissue over time, CDPHE and CPW will continue to monitor levels of metals in Animas River fish. New data will be analyzed and the results will be reported when available.”

CDPHE conducted a second sampling event in Mid-march to determine if additional metals uptake has occurred and laboratory results are pending.

From: Ethan Barton [mailto:ethan@dailycallernewsfoundation.org]
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 2:25 PM
To: Press <Press@epa.gov>; Lemon, Mollie <Lemon.Mollie@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Bonita Peak Mining District HRS

Here's the link to the HRS document, for your convenience:

<https://semspub.epa.gov/work/08/1769520.pdf>

On Thu, Apr 14, 2016 at 2:24 PM, Ethan Barton <ethan@dailycallernewsfoundation.org> wrote:

Hello,

I have some questions regarding the Bonita Peak Mining District HRS Documentation Record.

I would like to know why the drinking water threat was not scored. The document shows that ground water migration pathway was not scored because of the low population density and because there are "no municipal wells located within the four mile radius that serve as potable supplies."

However, Silverton, Colorado, Farmington, New Mexico, and the Navajo Nation have all had their water supplies affected by the Gold King Mine release, which suggests water supplies are, in fact, impacted by the Bonita Peak Mining District.

Additionally, both the human food chain and the environmental threats scored the max values. How is it that the EPA claims the river is safe for humans and that drinking water is not affected, yet the human food chain is heavily threatened?

Given the threat to the human food chain, have residents who live in the area who consume wildlife, such as fishers in Silverton, Colorado, been warned of this threat and been given guidance?

In sum:

1. Why was drinking water not assessed in the HRS, given the details provided?

2. How can the human food chain be so heavily threatened, but the drinking water, as well as the Animas River, is safe for humans?

3. Has the EPA warned local residents and provided guidance on the threat to the human food chain?

My deadline is end of business today.

Thanks,

Ethan

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Ethan Barton

Investigative Reporter

Daily Caller News Foundation

410-829-1738

@ethanrbarton

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Ethan Barton

Investigative Reporter

Daily Caller News Foundation

410-829-1738

@ethanrbarton

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Ethan Barton
Investigative Reporter
Daily Caller News Foundation
410-829-1738
@ethanrbarton